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ABSTRACT

A 1988-89 statewide survey of 244 Nevada counselors examined the differences between rural and urban counselors in perceiving five imperatives through which counselors can contribute to educational improvement. These are: (1) providing an increased emphasis on learning and cognition; (2) diffusing guidance and counseling throughout the curriculum; (3) incorporating life-career planning in counseling; (4) planning for professional renewal; and (5) implementing ongoing assessment of personal and program effectiveness. Respondents' opinions about the proposed statewide changes in counseling were also examined. The instrument included 66 items regarding: (1) professional activities; frequency of developmental guidance and counseling elements in the schools' programs; (2) allocation of time; (3) counselors' beliefs regarding the goals of guidance and counseling programs; and (4) the degree to which such goals are supported by their schools' programs. The results suggest that rural counselors and urban counselors differ significantly on all measures of these variables. Urban counselors had greater access to opportunities for professional development, but experienced greater pressure regarding the types of peripheral duties they must assume in their roles as counselors. Rural counselors had inadequate resources to offer comprehensive programs or to obtain additional training, but they often have less complex work situations and more contact with students and teachers. (ALL)

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Rural Counseling Perspectives on Proposed Statewide Changes in Guidance and Counseling Programs

by

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Abstract

Nationwide, guidance and counseling personnel have identified five imperatives that counselors can contribute to educational excellence. These include: providing an increased emphasis on learning and cognition (learning styles, decision-making skills, etc.); diffusing guidance and counseling throughout the curriculum; incorporating life-career planning in counseling (as a developmental approach); planning for professional renewal; and implementing ongoing assessment of personal and program effectiveness. The current study examines the differences in rural versus urban counselors' beliefs about the importance of these imperatives, their perceptions of the prevalence of each of these in their schools, and the implications of proposed statewide changes in guidance and counseling programs with respect to such imperatives. The sample in this study included 224 counselors who responded to a statewide survey during 1988-89. Of these, 25.6% were working as counselors (K-12) in rural areas of the state and 74.4% were working in the state's urban areas. The survey included 66 items. This study reports on the results related to urban and rural differences regarding professional development, participation in professional activities, frequency of comprehensive, developmental guidance and counseling elements in the schools programs, allocation of time, counselors' beliefs regarding the goals of guidance and counseling programs and the degree to which such goals are supported by their schools' programs, and four statewide issues: provision and hiring of elementary school counselors, establishment of a separate pupil personnel services branch at the state department of education, defined student/counselor ratios, and development of a comprehensive guidance and counseling course of study. The results suggest that rural counselors and urban counselors are significantly different from one another on all measures of these variables, with urban counselors having greater access to opportunities for professional development, but experiencing greater pressure regarding the number of students and types of peripheral duties they must assume in their roles as counselors. Rural counselors are less likely to have the resources to offer comprehensive programs or to obtain additional training, but often have less complex work situations and greater student and teacher contact throughout the course of their daily counseling activities.

Introduction

Nationwide, guidance and counseling personnel have identified five imperatives that counselors can contribute to educational excellence. These include: 1) providing an increased emphasis on learning and cognition (learning styles, decision-making skills, etc.); 2) diffusing guidance and counseling throughout the curriculum; 3) incorporating life-career planning in counseling (as a developmental approach); 4) planning for professional renewal; and 5) implementing ongoing assessment of personal and program effectiveness. A major emphasis of these five imperatives is the requirement that "educational excellence" be an issue for *all* students (Walz, G., 1984).

A number of states are engaged in reconceptualizing guidance and counseling programs, including such states as Missouri, Georgia, New Jersey, Ohio, Illinois, Oklahoma and Indiana. Several key concepts emerge across their various programs that are similar to those advocated by Walz from the national clearinghouse on guidance and counseling and those being advocated in the state of Nevada. Just as teachers have moved toward competency-based instruction, guidance and counseling personnel are feeling the same urgency to identify the types of competencies students should acquire throughout their schooling and master by the time they leave school. These student competencies include the more traditional academic skills (e.g., cognitive skills like gathering and processing information, decision making and problem solving) as well as social skills (i.e.,

interpersonal relations, expressing ideas, rights and responsibilities) (Gunderson & Moore, 1983; Monroe, 1981).

Although models developed by these states' Departments of Education have applications for rural schools, thus far, none of the states represented include states in the frontier west, where rural schools are uniquely characterized as "remote" or "isolated". In Nevada, just as it is in states like Utah or New Mexico, for example, this is an important consideration with respect to proposing and implementing statewide changes in guidance and counseling programs. Therefore, it became one of the factors we studied in a statewide survey of guidance and counseling personnel and programs.

Guidance and counseling in Nevada have historically been defined at the school district and building site level. Generally, each school principal developed a set of guidelines that specified the counselor's role and duties in relation to serving students. That is, the emphasis historically was on guidance and counseling "duties" versus "programs" and these duties were unique from school to school in Nevada.

Two important changes are taking place in Nevada and other states that relate to the shift from duties to programs. First, the guidance and counseling profession is mobilizing and taking a more active role in defining the components of guidance and counseling programs. Second, the profession is advocating that support for such programs become a

permanent part of the policies and practices of their states.

This study was designed to examine some of the current practices and structures in place in rural and urban school guidance and counseling programs and to investigate issues related to the shift toward developing comprehensive guidance and counseling programs that can realistically serve states' urban and rural students.

Research Question:

Recognizing that states are moving toward comprehensive, developmental guidance and counseling programs that mandate specific criteria be met for all students, we were interested in the general question:

> How can states be responsive to the differing needs (i.e., training and resource development) of rural schools and urban schools as they begin to adopt and implement comprehensive, developmental guidance and counseling programs?

More specifically, we needed to address the questions:

1) What are the differences in training and licensing of rural versus urban school counselors?
2) What are the differences in the types of guidance and counseling services available to students in rural versus urban schools?

3) What are the differences in rural counselors versus urban counselors perceptions of proposed statewide changes for guidance and counseling programs?

Method:

Sample. The survey instrument used for this study was administered to all 315 school counselors in the state of Nevada. A total of 224 counselors responded--generating a 71.1% response rate. Of these 224, 25.6% (N=59) were from the rural areas and 74.4% (N=165) were from the urban areas (see Table 1). A total of 20.2% were elementary counselors, 24.2% were 6th grade, junior high or middle school counselors, 40.4% were high school conselors, 4% were counselors for junior/senior high school combinations, 10.3% were K-12 counselors and approximately 1% were counselors in K-8 settings (see Table 2). The item response rates ranged from 75.4% (N=169) to 100% (N=224). The lowest response rates were associated with the items asking counselors to assign percentages to the time they devoted to carrying out various types of educational functions and duties. One of the respondents frequently did not respond to items, therefore, the number of items with N=224 are few.

Survey. The survey used for the overall study consisted of 66 items. In addition to the demographic items, this study reports on the results related to rural and urban differences regarding six variables.

1) professional development (licensing, continuing education),

Table 1

Percent Frequencies of Guidance and Counseling Personnel Demographics

99.6% Representation (N=223)

	Total %	N
Gender		
Males	38.6%	(86)
Females	61.4%	(137)
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	89.6%	(198)
Black	5.9%	(13)
Asian/Pacific	1.8%	(4)
Islander	1.4%	(2)
Hispanic	1.4%	(3)
Native American	0.9%	(2)
Other	0.5%	(1)
Age		
20-25 years of age	0.5%	(1)
26-30	1.8%	(4)
31-35	9.5%	(21)
36-40	16.7%	(37)
41-45	24.9%	(55)
46-50	18.6%	(41)
51-55	15.4%	(34)
56-60	9.5%	(21)
61 or older	3.2%	(7)

Table 2

School Assignment/Location of Guidance and Counseling Personnel

99.6% Representation (N=223)

	Rural 25.6% (57)	Urban 74.4% (166)	Total
Type of School			
Elementary	19.3% (11)	20.5% (34)	20.2% (45)
Middle School	12.3% (7)	8.4% (14)	9.4% (21)
Junior High	7.0% (4)	15.1% (25)	13.0% (29)
Senior High	29.8% (17)	44.0% (73)	40.4% (90)
K-8	1.8% (1)	0.6% (1)	0.9% (2)
Jr/Sr High	8.8% (5)	2.4% (4)	4.0% (9)
6th Grade Center	0 (0)	2.4% (4)	1.8% (4)
Other *(K-12)	21.0% (12)	6.6% (11)	10.3% (23)
Geographic Location			
Rural	Not Asked	12.0% (20)	
Urban	Not Asked	88.0% (147)	

* Checked by some respondents with no clarification provided; other clarifiers included K-12.

2) participation in professional activities,
3) frequency of comprehensive, developmental guidance and counseling elements in schools' programs,
4) allocation of time,
5) counselors' beliefs regarding the goals of guidance and counseling programs and the degree to which such goals are supported by their schools' programs, and
6) counselors' perceptions of four statewide issues.

Three items were used to measure the first variable: "Which of the following Nevada licenses do you presently hold?", "How many years of school counseling will you have completed at the end of this academic year?" and "During the last five years, or the number of years you have been counseling if fewer than five, what kinds of credit have you completed for professional development?" One item, "Circle as many of the following professional activities in which you have been involved at any time duirng your career as a school counselor", was used to measure the participation in professional activities variable.

Two items were used to measure the third variable. The first asked counselors "How are students assigned to you?" and the second asked counselors to "indicate the extent to which the following occur as part of the counseling and guidance program in (their) school setting(s). Twelve dimensions of services were examined, including student opportunities for personal and social growth, self-assessment, short and long-range goal planning, exposure to a diverse guidance and

counseling delivery system of parents, teachers, counselors, and community personnel, school-to-work transition, consultation, small group counseling, crisis counseling, referral and counselor opportunities for professional development, professional meetings, and feedback from teachers.

The fourth variable was measured by one item that asked counselors to indicate "(using percentages totaling 100%) how much of your time is spent on each of the following activities over the course of an entire school year". The log of activities included five categories "curriculum" (such as classroom and group activities), "individual planning" (advisement, placement), "responsive services" (consultation, personal counseling), "system support" (research, staff development), and "non-guidance, administrative/clerical activities" (bus duty, balancing class sizes).

The fifth variable was measured by seven items that incorporated a set of goals for guidance and counseling programs drawn from the documentation in the literature regarding statewide models for comprehensive, developmental programs. Counselors were asked to "circle the number that corresponded with 1) self: the extent to which you agree with the statement..., as a goal for counseling and guidance programs, and 2) your school's program: the extent to which your school's counseling and guidance program reflects this goal. Two lichert-type scales were used for each. The first used a 1-5 scale where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. The second used a 1-3 scale in which 1=not supported, 2=supported, and 3= strongly supported. The goals included: "guidance is a program for all students"; " guidance is an integral part of the education process..."; "guidance is a

planned, sequential program..."; "guidance provides remediation and educational programs for students with special needs"; "guidance is a team relationship..."; "guidance is delivered through a variety of systems..."; "guidance is evaluated as to its effectiveness on student outcomes".

In Nevada, four specific statewide issues are currently being debated:

- Hiring and provision of elementary school counselors
- Establishing a separate pupil personel services branch
- A defined student/counselor ratio for each type of school
- A course of study (i.e., state standards and guidelines) for comprehensive guidance and counseling programs.

To assess the sixth variable, counselors were asked to indicate "the degree to which you favor or do not favor these changes" using a 1-5 lichert-type scale.

Results:

Research Question #1. What are the differences in training and licensing of rural versus urban school counselors? Urban counselors were significantly more likely to be licensed to counsel in a variety of settings and to provide a variety of services. Significantly more held elementary counseling licenses, secondary counseling licenses, and special counseling licenses (see Table 3). The mean number of years of counseling for Nevada's rural counselors was M= 7.21, SD = 5.3, whereas, for urban counselors it was M=9.83, SD= 7.1. Urban counselors had significantly more years of counseling than rural counselors (see Table 4). Approximately 65% of

Table 3

Types of Licenses Held by Nevada's Guidance and Counseling Personnel: Percent Held by Rural and Urban Personnel

Location (N=223)	Rural	Urban	Total
Types of Licenses:			
Elementary Teacher			
N	10	51	61
%	17.5%	30.7%	27. 4%
Secondary Teacher			
N	25	80	105
%	43.9%	48.2%	47. 1%
Elementary Counselor			
N	18	65	83
%	31.6%	39.2%	37. 2%
Special Secondary Counselor			
N	33	103	166
%	57.9%	62.0%	74. 4%
Special Counselor			
N	25	66	91
%	43.9%	39.8%	40. 8%
Special Administrator			
N	9	32	41
%	15.8%	19.3%	18. 4%
Special K-12 Teacher			
N	7	21	28
%	12.3%	12.7%	12. 6%
Other			
N	15	44	59
%	26.3%	26.5%	26. 5%

Note: Percentages indicate the percentage of either rural or urban counselors that indicated that they had the specific license.

Table 4

School Counseling Years[A] Completed by Rural and Urban Educators

	Percent of Personnel			
	Rural (N=57)	Urban (N=166)	Total (N=223)	MEAN
Years:				
0-3	17.6% (10)	20.4% (34)	20.1% (44)	10.1 YRS
4-5	19.4% (11)	16.3% (27)	17.0% (38)	
6-10	28.0% (16)	19.3% (32)	21.4% (48)	
11-15	22.8% (13)	20.5% (34)	21.0% (47)	
16-20	7.0% (4)	13.8% (23)	12.1% (27)	
21-25	3.5% (2)	6.6% (11)	5.8% (13)	
26 or more	1.7% (1)	3.0% (5)	2.6% (6)	

A=years in-and out-of-state

rural counselors have worked under 10 years in the schools whereas, 56% of urban counselors have less than 10 years experience. Although, approximately half of our counselors are trained out-of-state, most of the work experience of our counselors is obtained in Nevada's districts and schools. Urban counselors reported earning significantly more credits toward professional development through in-service, continuing education, university courses in education, and university courses in counseling, than did rural counselors (see Table 5).

Research Question #2. What are the differences in the types of guidance and counseling services available to students in rural versus urban schools? In the rural areas there were significant differences in the ways students were assigned to counselors from those of their urban counterparts. The most common difference between the two was that the rural counselor was more likely to be assigned to the entire school's student body, whereas, urban counselors were more likely to be assigned to students based on special needs or expertise (e.g., college-bound) or on a first-come-first-serve basis. Regarding the twelve dimensions of services offered by guidance and counseling programs, there were significant differences between rural and urban programs on 9 of the 12 dimensions (see Table 6). On three of the nine, rural schools were more likely to provide such services than urban schools: student self-assessment, support from diverse groups, and the school-to-work transition. On the remaining six, consultation, small group counseling, crisis counseling, referral, professional meetings, and feedback from teachers, urban schools were more likely to provide these services for students and counselors.

Table 5

Mean Number of Years Guidance and Counseling Personnel Have Been Practicing in Nevada's Schools

	Rural (N=57)	Urban (N=166)	Total (N=223)
Elementary			
M	4.42	5.86	5.49
SD	3.06	4.45	4.16
Junior High/ Middle School			
M	6.64	9.98	9.30
SD	4.50	6.90	6.59
High School			
M	9.41	11.16	10.83
SD	7.62	7.50	7.51
Other			
M	7.35	12.20	9.63
SD	3.28	8.19	6.47
Total			
N	57	166	223
M	7.21	9.83*	9.16
SD	5.32	7.15	6.81

* $p<.05$

Table 6

Mean Ratings[A] of the Extent to Which Guidance and Counseling Program Elements Occur in Nevada's Rural and Urban Schools

Program Element	Rural* (N=59)	Urban 1 (N=60)	Urban 2 (N=102)	Total (N=221)
Personal & Social Growth				
M	4.0	4.17	3.62	3. 87
SD	0.93	0.96	1.05	1. 02
Student Self-Assessment				
M	3.98	3.34	3.56	3. 61@
SD	0.90	1.08	1.10	1. 07
Short and Long-Range Goals				
M	3.25	3.18	3.48	3. 34
SD	1.08	1.11	1.13	1. 11
Support from Diverse Groups				
M	3.81	3.39	3.40	3. 51@
SD	0.96	0.95	1.19	1. 08
School-to-Work Transition				
M	3.49	2.79	3.14	3.14@
SD	1.18	1.33	1.24	1.26
Consultation				
M	4.41	4.50	4.18	4.33#
SD	0.73	0.76	0.94	0.84
Small-group Counseling				
M	4.37	4.40	3.98	4.19#
SD	0.85	0.97	1.05	1.00
Crisis Counseling				
M	4.29	4.36	4.10	4.22#
SD	0.79	0.87	1.03	0.93
Referral Sources				
M	4.60	4.75	4.62	4.64#
SD	0.53	0.52	0.65	0.60
Professional Development				
M	4.09	3.67	3.51	3.70
SD	0.97	1.07	1.19	1.12
Professional Meetings				
M	4.29	4.16	4.00	4.12#
SD	0.97	1.07	1.19	1.12
Student Feedback From Teachers				
M	4.63	4.48	4.28	4.43#
SD	0.64	0.76	0.80	0.76

* Carson City has been included as rural in this table. (@ p<.05 in favor of Rural; # p<.05 in favor of Urban)

A=Scale: 1=not at all 2=rarely 3=sometimes 4=frequently 5=most of the time

Finally, there were significant differences in the way rural versus urban school counselors identified the changes that would be required to meet their conceptions of the ideal job. Urban school counselors were most concerned with the number of students they had to deal with and indicated that reduction in caseload and peripheral duties would be the most critical changes, whereas rural school counselors were most concerned with the need for clarification or definition of duties, greater authority, and increased physical space. Rural school counselors were less likely to spend time on nonguidance, administrative/clerical duties than urban counselors, and with the exception of "responsive services", were more likely to devote time to such activities as "curriculum", "individual planning", and "system support"(see Table 7).

Research Question #3. What are the differences in rural counselors versus urban counselors perceptions of proposed statewide changes for guidance and counseling programs? Generally, there are few differences between rural and urban counselors insofar as their personal beliefs about the importance of each of the seven guidance and counseling program goals. Most reported agreement to strong agreement for each of the goals ($\underline{M}$= 3.60 to $\underline{M}$= 4.72) wherein the least important goal for all counselors was that the programs be evaluated as to their effectiveness in producing desired student outcomes and the most important goal was that guidance was a program for *all* students (see Table 8). There were significant differences, however, in how rural counselors versus urban counselors perceived their school's programs as supporting such goals. Rural schools appear to be more supportive in terms of all seven goals, than do urban schools (see Table 9). That is,

Table 7

Mean Percent of Annual Time Counselors Devote to Counseling Activities and Educational Functions in Nevada's Rural and Urban Schools

	Nevada's Counties			
	Rural (N=58)	Urban 1 (N=53)	Urban 2 (N=87)	Total (N=198)
Types of Activities				
Curriculum	18.26%	19.42%	11.14%	15. 49%
Individual Planning	16.40%	12.64%	18.43%	16.22%
Responsive Services	41.36%	49.32%	32.61%	39.75%
System Support	9.52%	9.32%	7.51%	8.57%
Nonguidance Administrative and Clerical Activities	14.03%	9.02%	29.44%	

Table 8

Mean Scores[A] for Counselors' Beliefs About the Goals of Guidance and Counseling Programs

	Nevada's Counties			
	Rural (N=59)	Urban 1 (N=60)	Urban 2 (N=99)	Total (N=219)
Goals for Counseling and Guidance Programs				
All Students				
M	4.74	4.79	4.62	4.72
SD	0.79	0.76	1.19	0.91
Integrated with Instruction				
M	4.60	4.64	4.54	4.61
SD	0.78	0.83	1.05	0.88
Planned and Sequential				
M	4.54	4.60	4.34	4.48
SD	0.95	0.86	1.11	0.98
Remediation for Special Needs				
M	4.21	4.36	4.05	4.21
SD	1.16	1.03	1.21	1.19
Team Relationship				
M	4.67	4.73	4.38	4.58
SD	0.85	0.81	1.18	0.97
Diverse Delivery System				
M	4.54	4.57	4.31	4.48
SD	0.93	0.88	1.13	0.98
Evaluated Through Student Outcomes				
M	3.83	3.47	3.50	3.60
SD	1.19	1.33	1.36	1.30

A Scale:
1=strongly disagree 2=disagree 3=neutral 4=agree 5=strongly agree

Table 9

Mean Scores[A] for Counselors' Beliefs About Whether Their Schools' Counseling and Guidance Programs Reflect These Goals

	Nevada's Counties			
	Rural (N=59)	Urban 1 (N=60)	Urban 2 (N=99)	Total (N=218)
Goals For Counseling and Guidance Programs				
All Students				
M	2.68	2.53	2.59	2.60
SD	0.54	0.68	0.75	0.68
Integrated with Instruction				
M	2.48	2.21	2.43	2.38
SD	0.63	0.72	0.71	0.69
Planned and Sequential				
M	2.22	1.88	2.02	2.04
SD	0.72	0.76	0.78	0.77
Remediation for Special Needs				
M	2.40	2.30	2.29	2.32
SD	0.72	0.68	0.79	0.74
Team Relationship				
M	2.59	2.35	2.43	2.44
SD	0.62	0.61	0.66	0.64
Diverse Delivery System				
M	2.39	2.18	2.33	2.30
SD	0.70	0.67	0.74	0.71
Evaluated Through Student Outcomes				
M	2.11	1.68	2.04	1.96
SD	0.76	0.70	0.69	0.73

A Scale:
1=Not Supported 2=Supported 3=Strongly Supported

if these are the cornerstones for a comprehensive, developmental guidance and counseling program, than the rural schools display greater congruence between personnel and program support for such goals than do urban schools.

The statewide changes proposed to address the shift to guidance and counseling programs based on these goals are not, however, supported equally by rural and urban counselors. Specifically, significantly more rural counselors favor the provision and hiring of elementary counselors and the establishment of a separate pupil personnel services branch, but signficantly fewer are in favor of defined student/counselor ratios or the development of state standards for comprehensive guidance and counseling programs than urban counselors (see Table 10).

Table 10

Mean Ratings[A] of the Degree to Which Counselors' Favor or Do Not Favor for Guidance and Counseling Issues

	Rural (N=59)	Urban 1 (N=61)	Urban 2 (N=97)	Total (N=218)
Issues:				
Hiring & Provision of Counselors in Elementary Schools				
M	4.90	4.82	4.66	4.76
SD	0.31	0.65	0.79	0.66
Separate Pupil Personnel Services Branch				
M	4.19	4.33	4.02	4.16
SD	1.29	1.22	1.22	1.24
Defined Student/ Counselor Ratios				
M	4.39	4.57	4.72	4.59
SD	0.83	0.76	0.55	0.71
Course of Study for Comprehensive Counseling & Guidance Programs				
M	4.16	4.28	4.36	4.28
SD	1.04	1.00	0.80	0.93

A=Scale:
scale from 1 to 5
1=definitely do not favor
5=definitely favor

Summary

Overall, the final response to the proposed changes was generally very favorable, but the responses were scattered in such a way that it was clear that, as one counselor put it, "different counselors in different schools have different needs". Although rural counselors and urban counselors differ significantly from one another on all measures of these variables with the exception of their beliefs about what goals should be in place in guidance and counseling programs, the differences between rural and urban districts on the variables studied need to be analyzed in greater depth, since it is evident from this study that differences between the urban districts in the state are sometimes just as significant.

However, this study does suggest some trends that are worthy of discussion and consideration as states plan for the development and implementation of statewide guidance and counseling programs. First, urban counselors have greater access to professional development opportunities than do rural counselors, therefore, state's interested in providing both rural and urban students with equitable services--and a broad range of services--will have to work cooperatively with educational agencies (i.e., institutions of higher education, local education agencies, etc.) to focus training opportunities in the rural areas. In addition, special attention may need to be given to targeting individuals interested in careers in rural school counseling to ensure that their programs of training include a broad range of service areas, since many of these individuals act as a one-person resource team to rural schools. That is, as the results suggest, rural school counselors often have more direct contact

with students and classrooms than do their urban counterparts (which is in part an artifact of their role in a rural school), therefore, they need to be trained to handle a diverse set of requirements and expectations since they often have no other colleague or specialist to turn to. An important question that will need to be addressed is: who will provide for/support rural counselors professional development needs (e.g., districts, state departments of education, universities, consortiums) and to what extent can resources be allocated to ensure that programs can be developed in the rural areas as easily as in the urban areas?

Second, although rural counselors are less likely to have the resources to offer comprehensive programs or to obtain additional training, they and their programs appear to be most receptive to the concept. Perhaps, because counselors in rural schools have different issues to attend to (i.e., they don't necessarily have the numbers assigned to their caseload that the urban counselors do), and because they must function in a variety of capacities, they are more likely to perceive the needs of the whole student as a logical foundation for guidance and counseling programs. As the results suggest, the rural counselor is willing, and with support and professional development, able. If the professional development issue is addressed, rural counselors and rural schools can be ready to implement comprehensive guidance and couneling programs. Whether the rural school *is* more receptive to the concept, or *appears* to be more receptive is not clear. For the most part, rural counselors report having greater contact with students and act on their behalf across a number of capacities. However, they also reported that they needed more clarification or definition of their duties and more authority to carry them out. The

professional status of the rural counselor from the perspective of teachers and administrators needs to be examined in greater depth before it can be assumed that professional development and allocation of resources will prepare them to implement the concept.

Since the data also suggest that rural counselors have less experience than urban counselors, we can speculate that recruitment and retention of rural school counselors is an issue. Since the program often *is* the person in a rural school, even if these counselors are trained and more comprehensive programs developed, schools and states still have to respond to the issue of "keeping" counselors long enough to make a difference and institutionalize programmatic changes. The isolation factor for rural counselors may contribute to the shorter length of time they work in rural schools, therefore, it may be important for states to develop consortiums or teams that bring rural counselors together more frequently with one another, with other educators and community personnel and with their urban counterparts, to work jointly on the development and implementation of guidance and counseling programs.

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